

Past Tense

Past Continuous/Progressive Tense

The past continuous tense is most often used for actions happening at some time in the past.

Uses of past continuous tense:

- It is used to indicate that a longer action in the past was interrupted. The interruption is usually a shorter action in the simple past.

Examples.

I was watching TV when she called.

When the phone rang, she was writing a letter.

- In USE 1, described above, the past continuous is interrupted by a shorter action in the simple past. However, we can also use a specific time as an interruption.

Examples.

Last night at 6 PM, I ate dinner.

Yesterday at this time, I was sitting at my desk at work.

Note: In the simple past, a specific time is used to show when an action began or finished. In the past continuous, a specific time only interrupts the action.

Examples.

Last night at 6 PM, I ate dinner. (I started eating at 6 PM)

Last night at 6 PM, I was eating dinner. (I started earlier, and at 6 PM, I was in the process of eating dinner.)

- When the past continuous tense is used with two actions in the same sentence, it expresses the idea that both actions were happening at the same time. The actions are parallel.

Examples.

I was studying while he was making dinner.

They were eating dinner, discussing their plans, and having a good time.

Sentence Structure of Past Continuous Tense

Structure of positive sentence: Subject + was/were + (ing form of verb) + Object.

Note: 'was' is used with 'he', 'she', 'it' and singular nouns. 'were' is used with 'you', 'we', 'they' and plural nouns.

Simple Sentences:

She was going to the market	They were going to the market
He was visiting his aunt's home.	I was visiting my aunt's home.
It was raining in winter.	We were playing a cricket match.
Jack was writing a letter.	You were eating a burger.

Structure of negative sentence: Subject + was/were + not + (ing form of verb) + Object.

Note: 'was' is used with 'he', 'she', 'it' and singular nouns. 'were' is used with 'you', 'we', 'they' and plural nouns.

Negative sentences:

They/We/You	Were not	Watching T.V.
He/She	Was not	Speaking French properly.
I	Was not	Visiting my aunt's home.
It	Was not	Raining in Ghana daily.

Structure of interrogative sentence: Was/were + Subject + (ing form of verb) + Object?

Note: 'was' is used with 'he', 'she', 'it' and singular nouns. 'were' is used with 'you', 'we', 'they' and plural nouns.

Interrogative Sentences:

Were	They/We/You	Making a cake on Sunday?
------	-------------	--------------------------

Was	He/She	Taking too much tea?
Was	I	Visiting my aunt's home?
Was	It	Raining in Brazil daily?

Note: 'was' is used with 'he', 'she', 'it' and singular nouns. 'were' is used with 'you', 'we', 'they' and plural nouns.